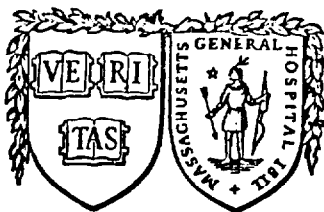


Harvard Medical School

Department of Psychiatry

Seymour S. Kety, M. D.

Professor of Psychiatry



The McLean Hospital

*A Division of the
Massachusetts General Hospital
(617) 855-3201*

THE MAILMAN RESEARCH CENTER
Director, Laboratories for Psychiatric Research

115 Mill Street
Belmont, Mass. 02178

December 18, 1978

Dr. Joshua Lederberg, President
Rockefeller University
66th Street and York Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Josh:

I was pleased to learn last week of your interest in establishing a division of psychiatric research at the Rockefeller University Hospital, even though my response to your request for comments and advice may be tinged with some reservations.

There is no doubt regarding the wisdom of such a move from the point of view of further progress in the field and the opportunities that exist today to make that progress. Our knowledge of the brain and its relation to behavior and mental illness has increased at a spectacular rate over the past two decades. Recognition of the chemical nature of synaptic transmission, the discovery of drugs with unprecedented specificity in the relief of the symptoms of mental illness, and compelling evidence for the operation of genetic and other biological factors in the etiology of the major psychoses, make clear the importance of the biological disciplines to psychiatry and present opportunities for further research which did not exist before. Establishment of a division of psychiatric research at the Rockefeller University would represent an important recognition of the validity of the field and its promise. Furthermore, such a division would both complement and benefit from the existing strength in fundamental biological, neurobiological, and psychological research at the University and the long tradition and strength in clinical investigation at the hospital.

My reservations, which I state not to deter you but in the hope of making your salutary intervention more effective, center on the difficulties which the field has had in achieving the support it could use most effectively from private foundations and public agencies. The public agency from

(... : Nichols) ↓

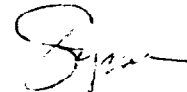
December 18, 1978

which such a division should expect its major support, the National Institute of Mental Health, has not, since it separated from the National Institutes of Health given the priority to research, particularly in the wide range of pertinent fundamental disciplines, or to biomedical research on the major mental illnesses, which exists in the Heart, Cancer, Neurological, or the other categorical institutes of the NIH. The separation itself, and the reorganization of the Institute which followed that separation, was based on the unproven assumptions that the medical model was inappropriate for mental illness and that this as well as a variety of social problems required the application of inadequately conceptualized social interventions as well as their further study. As a result, only nine million dollars annually has been allocated to research on schizophrenia, mainly on its psychosocial aspects, less than that on depression, and the biological disciplines, aside from pharmacology, have looked mainly to the Neurological Institute for their support. Perhaps as a consequence of this or because the constituencies of the NIMH did not place research at a very high priority, the extramural research budget of that Institute remained stationary, resulting in a 50 percent reduction when corrected for inflation, while the budgets for research in the Institutes of the NIH were increasing modestly or substantially.

Private foundations, in the belief that research was well supported by federal funds, have moved out of research support and insofar as their interests lie in health, in the direction of health care delivery. There are a small number of private foundations which continue to support psychiatric research but their funds are limited and their individual grants quite modest.

The situation may change, however, since there is a new director of the NIMH and an interest of the present administration in mental health. I would hope that the entrance of Rockefeller University into this field may actually serve to enhance its recognition and its support.

Yours sincerely,



Seymour S. Kety, M.D.

SSK/ap